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AUTHOR Nash, Paul
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ABSTRACT

A number of demographic, economic, and psychosocial developments already emergent in society are likely to continue and to intensify. These forces have already manifested themselves on the educational scene, causing anxiety and fear in students and teachers. Traditional North American values like obedience, hierarchical authority, and competitive individualism are dysfunctional in the face of these problems. Educational programs, practices, and settings need to be more relevant to human needs which will evolve in the coming decades. Three interdependent areas relevant to students and teachers for more effective and enjoyable living in the future are organizational competence, interpersonal competence, and personal competence. Professional education programs should recognize that teachers, like students, have fears, anxieties, feelings of incompetence, and a need for support, and that these feelings affect the educational process. Teachers need to be helped to become skillful practitioners of personal and interpersonal learning and to be able to foster both among their students. Effective living in the North American culture of the 1980's and the 1990's will require an education of the self. An effective program of schooling will help the participant become aware of himself entirely and to cope with pressures in society. (CJ)

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THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING

by Paul Nash

The first category of developments with which I should like to deal is the *demographic*. Although there are small, ambiguous indications that the steady fall in the birth-rate in the United States may be slowing, ceasing, or even reversing, I do not anticipate any major revolution in child-bearing patterns over the next two decades. We can be reasonably certain that school enrollments will continue to decline. Ideally, that would provide the opportunity for the school to be able to improve services to students by reducing the ratio of students to school personnel. However, in light of other developments that I will mention later, I do not expect this to happen. Instead, I expect the present trend of declining school budgets (in real terms) to continue.

This means that the absolute number of teachers, administrators, counselors, and psychologists will diminish. It also means that the number of annual vacancies among school staff will fall. There will be a slower rate of turnover among staff. The same familiar faces will show up in the faculty lounge. There will be fewer bright, young energetic, new teachers full of the kind of naive idealism that makes them both vulnerable on the one hand, and attractive, accessible, and helpful to many students on the other.

The second category of developments I should like to mention is the *economic*. We can already see the gathering signs that capitalism is undergoing a profound crisis, perhaps a terminal illness. The relationships (for example between inflation and unemployment) that John Maynard Keynes taught us to expect no longer operate with their predicted uniformity. Deep systemic problems face us, including chronic and apparently incurable inflation, high unemployment, widespread alienation in the labor force, indifference or hostility towards the poor, the sick, and the old, increasing pollution of the environment, and the near-exhaustion of many natural resources. The United States has been able to postpone the most drastic effects of the decline of capitalism by a policy of economic colonialism, backed by military support wherever needed. Through this policy, we managed to maintain elitist, oppressive, minority regimes in power in those Third World countries where we sought raw materials and markets for our industrial products. This was especially true in Latin America, South East Asia, and South Africa. Our success in keeping hierarchical governments in power in these parts of the world enabled us to gain cheap raw materials and to dump our industrial trash on these impoverished peoples.

The military defeat in Vietnam marked a change in this arrangement. Third World countries are beginning to assert their own strengths. Producers of raw materials in limited supply are beginning to realize the power inherent in their holdings and to change accordingly. As

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these changes begin to take effect, the inflated standard of living enjoyed by North Americans at the expense of Third World people begins to be revealed as an artificial and parasitical luxury. The value of the dollar depreciates against the value of currencies of harder-working countries, such as the yen. Foreign goods cost more, foreign travel becomes more expensive, and U.S. dollars are no longer the universally desired acquisition.

An increasing number of people in the United States begin to *feel* poor. Unemployment strikes many and the threat of unemployment strikes more. Many people take second jobs and in many families both parents work outside the home.

I do not expect these trends to reverse themselves in the next two decades. I cannot imagine the people of the Third World, with their rising consciousness of the above situation, failing to press for fairer prices for their scarce raw materials and greater power to decide on the location and conditions of operation of multi-national corporations on their soil. As a result, I expect North Americans to experience continued or increased austerity in the coming years. They will not be willing to spend larger proportions of their dwindling real incomes on public schooling. School budgets will continue to be questioned and contested. Taxpayer resistance will stiffen, although it will not always take the flamboyant Californian Proposition 13 form.

The third category of developments to be examined is the *psycho-social.* These developments are integrally related to the previous categories, in that causation and effect are mutually interwoven. Some of the factors I have in mind are a continued growth in the consciousness of women and minority groups about their place in North American society; a consequent questioning of traditional patterns of authority relationships, subordination, dependency, and exploitation; surfacing of many more relational problems among families, with resultant stress, turmoil, and conflict; many more divorces and separations and the appearance of the single parent or the separated parent as the typical family head.

As these changes occur, they will be accompanied by increased anxiety and tension. Parents who are nurturing a family alone and also working outside the home will feel a variety of pressures—economic, temporal, logistical, emotional, physical. Often they will feel guilty for failing to provide their children with two parents, they will try to *be* both parents, and will be torn by the effort. They will typically experience feelings of loss of control of their lives and their children's lives, feelings of incompetence, haste, and worry. Their children will be affected by these worries and anxieties and will themselves become tense and anxious. These problems will inescapably manifest themselves in the children's lives at school.

Let us now look at the school itself as the arena where some of these problems will be played out. First, we must acknowledge that school and culture are inextricably linked. School personnel are themselves subject to the pressures mentioned above. They, too, are parents, wage-earners, consumers, taxpayers, seeking to make sense of their lives and to live gracefully under pressure.

As we enter into a leaner, more austere, less indulgent era, there is a rise in the levels of anxiety, fear, and conservation. These forces have already manifested themselves on the educational scene. They reinforce some of the most disastrous tendencies in North American culture. I refer to the interlocking values of obedience, hierarchy, and competitive individualism. Related to these values is a stress on end-products and a concomitant contempt for proces. Thus we see in such times rather mindless demands for productivity unrelated to the unique natures of the producers. Typical examples are minimum competency performance, competency based education, grade by grade testing, and other forms of naive faith in the results of educational measurement. Fear is manifested in a time-bound anxiety about educational achievement and an obsession with doing things earlier. The so-called "Back to Basics" movement elicits nostalgia for a golden era of the past when all children read with ease, wrote with elegance, and computed with accuracy. There existed no such era. The Back to Basics movement also indulges in the fantasy that one could identify what are the *basic* requirements for living effectively in tomorrow's world by borrowing mindlessly the values and methods that did not even work well yesterday.

What, then, are the basic educational requirements for effective living in the last quarter of the twentieth century? Several of them have already been implied by the foregoing analysis. What I have been describing are what might be called "problems" of the coming decades. But we can equally view them as "challenges". And a challenge properly perceived can be an "opportunity". I should like, therefore, to examine the opportunities inherent in the coming situation as a way of discovering the educational imperatives of the future.

The principal opportunity I see is to make educational programs, practices, and settings more in harmony with the real human demands facing us in the coming decades and less anachronistic vestiges of past beliefs and mechanistic rituals whose original kernel of meaning has long withered within the shell.

Let me share what I think are the three basic areas in which people will need help through education for effective and enjoyable living in the future. The first is the area of *systemic or organizational competence*. Most of us, and an increasing majority, are going to have to live, work, and be effective in organizations, institutions, bureaucracies of one kind or another. Too much of our educational practice, and our teacher education, seems appropriate to educating people to live a sort of Walden-like existence. It might have been helpful in an era of lone cowboys, isolated wagons crossing the prairies, or bare-knuckled entrepeneurs in an age of primitive capitalism. But it is less helpful in preparing people to work effectively for organizational change in the 20th Century. Teachers, for example, are trained as if their working lives will be spent in an isolated classroom where they will be able to do their thing untrammeled by events outside the classroom door. But they quickly learn that their most heroic individual efforts, in terms of thorough preparation, long nights of correcting papers, and carefully nurtured relationships with students, can be nullified and mocked by school-wide or system-wide events over which they appear to have no control and whose arbitrariness debilitates them.

The students they teach will in turn suffer similar feelings of impotence in their own work settings if we do not help them to learn how organizations work, how to bring about humanistic improvements in institutions, how to move effectively through bureaucratic structures. Where should we do this? The best place is the school and school system in which the students are enrolled. Change, like charity, should begin at home. The next best alternative is through programs that introduce students to community organizations by studying them, working in them, and then returning to the high school to analyze what they have found, with the help of teachers and fellow students. Once they have tested work in these insitutions and have experienced the complexities of trying to effect even a small change in them, they will be ready to begin to organize the tough skills and knowledge related to issues of collaboration, team-building, leadership, conflict, power, and authority.

The second basic area that needs increased attention is that of *inter-personal competence*. To be able to work effectively in institutions means, for most people in our society, being able to work effectively with and through others. Institutions, in their dynamic aspect, *are* people. All of the tough, intractable problems of institutions and organizations are people problems. We have, in our instrumental, "how-to" society, gained incredibly control over things, materials, machinery. What we are not so good at is solving problems of human relationships. The interpersonal competence needed includes skills like listening, communicating, working collaboratively, group leadership and group membership, and the knowledge of how groups work, how to foster dialogue, how to build effective working teams, how to enhance group creativity.

As students increasingly learn to question anachronistic notions of authoritarian leadership, as previously submerged groups demand recognition and just treatment, as young people become increasingly aware of the nature of respectful human relationships, school personnel have to enhance their skills and sensitivity in the areas of participatory and shared leadership, just and respectful treatment of all students, and the stimulation of collaborative work, consensual decision making, and the development of synergetic energies.

These emphases will have to appear both in the classrooms and in a continuing program of professional development for all school personnel. With an increasingly stable, older, and less externally renewed professional work-force, there will be an exigent need for continuing internal self-renewal. Principals, janitors, teachers, secretaries, counselors, superintendents, psychologists, must all be partners in this program of individual, group, and institutional renewal.

The third and last area of basic studies that I should like to address is that of *personal competence*. There is more and more evidence accruing from medicine, educational research, psychotherapy, organizational development, social psychology, and other fields of investigation, to support the idea that interpersonal competence and personal competence are integrally connected, that the quality of interpersonal communication is to a large extent a function of the quality of interpersonal communication. If things within me are murky, confused,

chaotic, full of conflict, opaque, then this condition will be reflected in my interactions with others. In part, it is a question and focus of energy. If my head is in conflict with my gut, if my conscious intent is struggling against my libidinous urges, if there is a civil war going on within me, my primary energies will be directed there, and I will have less energy available for external relations.

Perhaps you have experienced the person who seems only half attentive to you, whose eyes appear glazed or whose mind is elsewhere, who says one thing with his voice but gives a conflicting message with his body, who seems unable to hear even simple messages. The chances are that his attention is directed mainly to some urgent, pressing, unfinished business within himself.

If we wish to help school personnel to cope effectively with the increasingly difficult and complex relational problems brought to school and classroom by students whose lives are chaotic, lonely, fragile, or uncertain, then we must find ways to help those adults to deal with some the the major issues of unfinished business and unresolvement within themselves. Otherwise they are too vulnerable to being hooked, manipulated, enraged, or terrified by emotionally charged student behavior that stimulates echoing and disturbing chords within themselves. This does not mean a process of individual psychotherapy for all school personnel. But it does mean that we cannot maintain the fictions that school minding is simple stuff, or that all you need to teach quadratic equations effectively is a knowledge of mathematics, or that teachers or students can leave their feelings outside the school when they enter.

Programs of professional development in the coming decades will have to address the issue that teachers, like students, are whole persons who have fears, anxieties, feelings of incompetence, a need for support, and sources of joy and hope, and that all of these emotions and desires affect what goes on from moment to moment of the educational process. If we want to help students to be able to experience the depth of their own feelings in the classroom—as they engage with a poem, a drama, an historical narrative, a work of art, great music, a vigorous controversy, and so on—then we must help their teachers to be comfortable with their feelings under situations of heightened emotion or stress.

These teachers need to be helped to become skillful practitioners of personal and interpersonal learning and to be able to foster both among their students. They need to become aware of the nature and complexity of interdependent learning and of the gains that accrue from supportive, non-competitive, collaborative modes of relating. They need to learn that the group that best motivates students to learn to think and act creatively is one in which there is much real listening, openness, trust, constructive feedback, and free speculation; in which students feel free to think metaphorically, analogically, and absurdly; in which there is great tolerance of fantasy, ambiguity, and new ideas; in which students explicitly give each other credit for their contributions and point out the strengths and positive values in even crazy-sounding notions; in which everyone builds on what has gone before rather than knocking down and starting afresh; and in which, instead of some winning (those whose idea prevail)

and some losing (those whose ideas are rejected), all win, because ideas are built upon others' ideas and everyone feels that he or she has a stake in the final outcome.

Effective living in the North American culture of the 1980's and 1990's will require an education in personal competence—an education of the self. By the "self" I mean not merely those human qualities that are considered useful by the industrial and commercial interests of society, but the entire range of human capacities, joys, and sensibilities. An effective program of schooling will help the participant become aware of himself entirely—mind, body, feelings, spirit, imagination.

Both formal schooling and the continuing professional education of school personnel msut focus on a serious and sustained process of self exploration and self understanding. Each student and each professional should be invited systematically through a series of basic questions, Who am I? What do I want? What do I think, feel, sense? What is my personal history? What are the features of my unique way of perceiving the world? What is my unique learning style? What are my strengths and limitations? What goals are worthy of my life's effort? What am I good for? In other words, the emphasis will be on those experiences that bring increased awareness of the self as a unique being in the world, increased sensitivity to one's special way of perceiving the world, and greater clarification and strengthening of one's personal values.

Summary

I have argued that a number of demographic, economic, and psychosocial developments already emergent in our society are likely to continue and to intensify. I have suggested that these developments will create a school populated by students and school personnel under a variety of stresses and pressures. I have suggested that traditional North American values like obedience, hierarchy, and competitive individualism are dysfunctional in face of such problems. The greater stability in the school personnel population will bring a need for greater attention to continuing professional education. I have suggested that the core of this professional education should be founded on the same basics as a student's schooling: systemic or organizational competence, interpersonal competence, and personal competence. I have argued that all three of these basics are integrally related. Work on any one area affects all three. None can be safely ignored.

I have sketched out some of the problems facing us but I look at them as challenges and hence as opportunities. I have great faith in the students, teachers, counselors, and administrators of this country. So I am fundamentally optimistic about the coming decades.